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intellectual attack with those fine qualities of personal attitude which are often associated with political and economic conservatism and attributed to the "gentleman of the old school."

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The Eve of the Revolution: A Chronicle of the Breach with England.

("The Chronicles of America" Series.) By CARL BECKER.

New Haven: Yale University Press. 8vo, pp. xiii+267.

Price \$3.50.

In theme and authorship alike *The Eve of the Revolution* invites the attention of the student of economics. It is just the period which the champion of the theory of economic determinism would select for a verification of his hypothesis. It is just the episode which the careful student of human annals would use to test that thesis; and Becker is just the man to make the test. His contributions to the methodology of history have been substantial. He is acquainted with developments in the sciences whose intent it is to explain human motives and conduct. No American historian knows better what he is about when he undertakes a piece of work, or is more sensitive to the nature of his materials.

This does not, however, convict Becker of using a thin narrative as a disguise behind which to erect a philosophy of history or to attempt to fathom the mystery of human conduct. He never for a moment loses the consciousness of his purpose, the limitations of his materials, and the uses of his tools; but like a good workman he keeps his craft knowledge to himself or formally expounds it elsewhere. His history is a simple, straightforward narrative, with never a word about "motives," "conduct," or "causation." Were it not for a reference in the preface to the volume as "an enterprise of questionable orthodoxy," the reader would accept it as only an interesting story well told.

The author's conception of his task is the re-creation of the past. He has no idea that truth inheres in a whole which is a mere aggregate of details carefully thumbed out of the "documents." He realizes that the larger outlines of his picture, which enable us to see the movement as a whole, necessarily involve inference and interpretation; so he attempts "to convey to the reader, not a record of what men did, but a sense of how they thought and felt about what they did." This prompts a rapidly moving and entertaining narrative, made up of incident, quotation, and comment. This runs from 1757, when Franklin was "ordered home" to England, to the Declaration of Independence in

1776. In this the outline of the story follows the conventional sequence of stamp tax, protest, and repeal; of customs duties, non-importation, and tea tax; of rights of colonists, Englishmen in America, and men.

The novelty of this account, alike in method and perspective, lies in the subtle and intelligent way in which the author shapes issue, incident, and character. There is the stuff of history in the peculiar angles from which British ministers and colonial aristocrats came at their differences. To the former, "colonial rights" were incidental to a minor schedule in a tax bill; but the latter, thanks to a "virtuous republicanism," easily stamped "small matters" with "great character." The incidents of the story are in some wise different when we learn that R. H. Lee was an applicant for the position of stamp distributor in Virginia, and that the soldiers implicated in the "Boston massacre" were defended by John Adams and Josiah Quincy.

The meaning of the episode depends even more upon the kind of men who made it. At Becker's touch the actors have a human frailty and a freshness which is all too common in life and all too rare in history. Note, for instance, how Franklin fares. He is the Ben Franklin whom all of us associate with the idea of thrift, and who as an incarnation of the calculus of time is invaluable to Sombart in explaining the rise of capitalism. Yet in the story this "Friend of the Human Race" is pictured as being charged with an important mission to England, and yet dallying away two months "more uselessly than ever he could remember" in getting away from New York. There is too an implication that the five years spent in the mother-country, because of a departure delayed month by month, were consumed largely in "interesting and agreeable conversation." At Becker's hands it is the impecunious Samuel Adams, and not John Hancock, a merchant with interests and foreign competitors, who is most responsible for the Revolution. Adams, who was "without any aptitude whatever" for business and "entirely devoid of the acquisitive instinct," had both talent and aptitude for looking after the community's business. His native habitat was the semipopular, semipolitical "Caucus Club." He is represented "placed in Tom Dadwes' garret, dimly seen through tobacco smoke, sitting with coat off, drinking flip," and laying plans for advancing the cause of liberty.

Shrewdly or by accident the author limits his narrative almost exclusively to a record of incident and opinion in the small provincial town of Boston. The book is largely a record of what men in this neighborhood did and felt, and what they thought had been their reasons for

doing and feeling. Even though the story shifts elsewhere to take account of Franklin's trip to England, the Dickinson letters, the Virginia resolutions, and other matters—these seem to find a place because they get into the sequel of occurrences in Boston town. Such excursions do not take away the impression which the volume as a whole gives that the Revolution was a product of verbal Boston, and that the function of the rest of colonial America was to behold and approve. The sudden shift, when independence was declared, from the rights of Englishmen in America, which had stirred Boston, to the rights of man, in terms of which the abstract Mr. Jefferson had been thinking, leads one to suspect that something of the Revolution came from out some other part of the country; but this disadvantage is more than offset by the increasing clarity of the picture of how the little things of village life make history.

Beneath this easy narrative the stuff of which Becker re-creates his past shows itself. It consists of action, feeling, and thought arranged in every conceivable permutation. His actors are differently endowed, responsive in different degrees to the conventions about them, and very different in their sensibilities to material gain. They are moved by selfishness that seeks its interest, stupidity that knows it not, obstinacy that cannot or will not understand, and zeal that overrides personal considerations. They can be actuated by selfish ends, but they are honestly capable of taking high moral grounds when pursuing them. On the whole they are men who live a very real life, are much concerned with the persons and issues immediately about them, get their satisfaction largely in living and acting from day to day, and only gradually become conscious of the great end of independence and unity to which their acts tend. Among them a few, making of the issue what it was not, remain steadfast in the faith; but the many waver in interest and attachment as the issue shifts, or the struggle waxes and wanes. It is an unforeseen future which endows polemic and musket with an interest and value foreign to the man and the occasion.

It is the stuff and the making of Becker's book which one who would judge it must take into account. He might claim irresponsibility for the story on the ground that he has merely "allowed the facts to convey their own meaning"; but he knows too well how facts tell different stories for different men to make such a claim. The issue is in their selection and in their use. The task, as the author has conceived it, has been well done. The question is of his conception. Some readers will prefer an account that glorifies the actors as the conscious fabricators of a wonderful event; others will prefer a "scientific" history that fails

to discover truth in a multitude of unrelated details; still others will prefer an account of a clear-cut struggle between two economic groups, each conscious of its interests and striving zealously for them; but to an increasing number who insist that if history is to be "much ado" it must be about something, and that the past was full of real people who took part in real incidents, books like Becker's will become increasingly popular.

The volume settles no cosmic question. It is full of human motives and conduct, but it attempts to answer no question about the inscrutable mystery of human behavior. Instead of explaining it, the author exhibits it. One may be inclined to find fault with a detachment which makes him seem to say, "History is an interesting record of human antics; it well repays the time given to it." But he must forgive a disciple of the "new history," who, despite his "questionable orthodoxy," refuses to furnish in a book dealing with the period which saw the rise of orthodox political economy a refuge for the homeless "economic man."

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Imperial England. By CECIL FAIRFIELD LAVELL and CHARLES EDWARD PAYNE. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918. Pp. ix+395. \$2.00.

The authors, who are professors of history in Grinnell College, are interested in the experience of the British Empire in connection with problems of world-reorganization and the League of Nations. They point out that the empire is in large part itself a League of Free Nations, and also that it has developed an elaborate and successful system for governing and educating "backward" groups. An understanding of its history is therefore of particular interest at the present time. To cover the whole development of the empire details are necessarily omitted, except by way of occasional illustration; but the resulting treatment of broad general causes, movements, policies, and problems is interesting and valuable. Chapters are included on Ireland and the effect of the war on the empire as a whole.